

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6021

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMMEMBASSY BUDAPEST 3073

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ENRG, ETRD, UR, COMECON

SUBJECT: ORENBURG PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION CROSSES THE RIVER DON

1. A BRIEF PROGRESS REPORT ON CONTRUCTION OF ORENBURG NATURAL GAS PIPELINE APPEARS IN JULY 3 IZVESTIYA ARTICLE WHICH ANNOUNCES THAT SPECIAL BRIGADES HAVE COMPLETED A 700 METER STEEL TRACK ACROSS BOTTOM OF THE DON RIVER IN VOLGOGRAD OBLAST. THREE SEPARATE LINES OF PIPE WILL BE LASHED TO THE UNDERWATER TRACK BEFORE THE END OF 1976. WORK ON THE UNDERWATER CROSSING WAS ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT ANY INTERRUPTION TO RIVER TRAFFIC AND WAS COMPLETED TWO MONTHS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.

2. COMMENT: FRAGMENTARY INFORMATION WHICH EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED UP TO NOW MAKES IT VERY DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE WHETHER OR NOT
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ORENBURG LINE WILL BE COMPLETED ON SCHEDULE DURING LAST

QUARTER OF 1978. A US ENGINEER WHO HAS VISITED SOME OF CONSTRUCTION SITES AND HAS BEEN FOLLOWING PROJECT CLOSELY RECENTLY TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER THAT BY FORCED DRAFT COMPLETION OF A LIMITED NUMBER OF COMPRESSOR STATIONS -- PERHAPS LESS THAN HALF OF PLANNED TOTAL OF 22 -- SOVIETS SHOULD BE ABLE TO FORCE ENOUGH GAS THROUGH LINE AT END OF 1978 TO PROVIDE LIMITED SUPPLY TO EASTERN EUROPE. THUS, OPENING CEREMONIES, INCLUDING LIGHTING IN EE COUNTRIES OF FIRST FLAME FROM ORENBURG GAS, COULD TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED. THIS WOULD, OF COURSE, BE SIMILAR TO PUSHING FIRST, HAND-MADE MOTOR VEHICLE THROUGH KAMA RIVER PLANT ASSEMBLY LINE ON DAY SPECIFIED FOR COMMENCEMENT OF PRODUCTION, A FACE-SAVING BUT NOT VERY SATISFACTORY OPERATION. STOESSEL

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